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Character Motivation and Definition Through Dialog in the Memory Plays of Harold Pinter

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CHARACTER MOTIVATION AND DEFINITION THROUGH DIALOG IN THE MEMORY PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER

(TITLE)

BY

DOUGLAS E. GROHNE

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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CHARACTER MOTIVATION AND DEFINITION THROUGH DIALOG IN THE MEMORY PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER

BY

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B.A. IN BIOLOGY
ILLINOIS COLLEGE
1977

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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1981

Several critics have suggested that the plays of Harold Pinter are incomprehensible because the characters do not explicitly explain their actions and motivations. These comments come because the critics and audiences are conditioned to expect a playwright to in some way explain the motivations and personalities of his characters with a standard explanation given through explicit dialog, copious stage directions, or other means. But Pinter believes that it is dangerous for a playwright to design a play with one overall purpose in mind because the chances are that the purpose will be mistaken.

Pinter prefers to write in a realistic way; his plays are like an ordinary conversation between two or more people. In such a conversation because these people are not wearing labels around their necks telling everything there is to know about them, one must listen to a person's words, noting the way they are said as well as the effect they have on other members of the conversation. By noting the tone, pauses, and what information is stated in a character's dialog, one can learn a character's motivation as well as his fears, attitudes, and desires.

The memory plays examined here, written between 1969 and 1975, are especially fruitful for character analysis. In these plays, Pinter explores the nature of subjective memory and the serious conflict resulting from different memories of a common event. A character's profile can be revealed by his

confidence or lack of confidence in his personal interpretation of events.

Landscape is the story of a man and a woman who do not seem to be communicating in a normal way. They never talk directly to each other; the woman is caught up in remembering a gentle love affair in the past while the man tries to get her to respond to the things that interest him in the present.

Silence explores the inside of the mind of a girl in her twenties who is trying to sort out the details of two love affairs. She seems to have lost both of the men and is searching for someone to depend upon and give her a clear reality.

Night is a short revue sketch that, in answer to the situation in Landscape, shows that love and maturity between a married couple can prevent differing memories from causing a conflict. It also shows that individuality does remain in marriage.

Old Times shows that a strong subjective memory of an event can protect a person from being forced to accept another's differing memory of the same event as the truth.

No Man's Land describes an intruder who not only tries to influence the host into accepting him, but he also tries to influence the audience as well. Pinter also uses audience preconceptions about language and style to show his views of subjective reality.

The seeming lack of comprehensibility which critics note in the plays of Harold Pinter is probably due to Pinter's view of writing. Though any writer facing a blank page is apt to have problems developing a form appropriate to his content, Pinter's work is distinguished by the fact that he does have a form, one that defies traditional expectations. Some playwrights forge their work to eliminate all ambiguities, allowing the characters to explain explicitly their motives and their actions. However, in Pinter's plays, motivation must be discovered by looking beneath a character's words, by looking at his manner of speaking, and by observing the reactions of the other characters to his words.

In fact, Pinter stresses the danger he sees in making an explicit, definitive statement.

> . . . there are at least twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement, depending on where you're standing at the time or on what the weather's like. A categorical statement, I find, will never stay where it is and be finite. It will immediately be subject to modification by the other twenty-three possibilities of it.[1]

In other words, a playwright that tries to hammer out a definitive view, according to Pinter, is leaving himself open to the risk that the audience will form a contradictory interpretation which may confuse the entire meaning of the play.

Police experience examples of the natural ambiguity of interpretation when they have several witnesses to a crime. Each witness, having his own method of interpretation, will give a different version of the same event; possibly the suspect is someone he knew and wanted to protect, or he looked like someone he had had a relationship with. Such factors and more will serve to cloud the interpretation. This example can be applied to play-writing. An ordinary playwright might describe exactly what happened in a crime; but for Pinter, the writer would be as guilty as the witnesses in presenting only one more interpretation of what has happened.

Pinter takes this natural ambiguity of interpretation and presents his plays in a very realistic way, much like an ordinary conversation between several people. The audiences are allowed to eavesdrop and form their own opinions about what is happening without the playwright's leading them by the hand and insisting on his own interpretation. Thus, Pinter's plays seem incomprehensible only because audiences are conditioned to expect a standard explanation rather than having to rely entirely upon their own subjective interpretation. Pinter states as much in discussing our tendencies to symbolize:

> When a character cannot be comfortably defined or understood in terms of the familiar, the tendency is to perch him on a symbolic shelf, out of harm's way. Once there, he can be talked about but need not be lived with. In this way, it is easy to put up a pretty efficient smoke screen, on the part of the critics or the audience, against recognition, against an active and willing

> participation.
> We don't carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed to us by others, they convince nobody.[2]

In another statement, Pinter writes of his distrust of playwrights who seem to know too much about what they are doing:

> Beware of the writer who puts forward his concern for you to embrace, who leaves you in no doubt of his worthiness, his usefulness, his altruism, who declares that his heart is in the right place, and ensures that it can be seen in full view, a pulsating mass where his characters ought to be. What is presented, so much of the time, as a body of active and positive thought is in fact a body lost in a prison of empty definition and cliché.[3]

What sets Pinter's plays apart from more traditional works also is his ability to induce audiences to think while watching. Instead of hoping that the director will present the play exactly as the author thinks it should be presented so that a certain percentage of the audience will get his message as planned, Pinter sees his plays as an ongoing learning process, even for the writer. In an essay on writing for the theatre, he describes two periods in the development of a play even after it has been written: the rehearsal and the performance, in both of which "a dramatist will absorb a great many things of value. . . ."[4] For even with the experience of seeing the play performed, the dramatist can never be sure that he has found the key to how to perfect a play.

> The playwright is . . . left looking at the blank page. In that play is

> something or nothing. You don't know until you've covered it. And there's no guarantee that you will know then. But it always remains a chance worth taking.
>
> I've written nine plays [as of 1964] for various mediums, and at the moment I haven't the slightest idea how I've managed to do it.[5]

Since Pinter does not set out with a specific goal when he writes a play, the resulting work may at first appear to be without form or direction. Moreover, since the audience is also denied an omnipotent director and/or dramatist to verify the behavior of the characters, then the audience must become detectives, finding clues in the only place possible, in the dialog. In each of the memory plays discussed in this paper, the characters are revealed through their recollection of events that may or may not be remembered by other characters. For a character who describes an event that is also retold by another reveals in his own version his fears, desires, and attitudes. However, in the earlier plays, memory alone did not describe a character. Instead, in these works, a character was defined largely by his or her reaction to other characters.

For the reader, the search for comprehension in the plays starts with the stage directions. In traditional theatre, there often is a paragraph or two which describes all of the background material needed for a director or a reader to form a mental picture of a certain character. The reader may be given a complete physical description as well as details of the occupation and/or the personal history that caused the character to be in the situation presented at the beginning of Act I. However, in Pinter's plays, the reader is merely given the

chronological age of the characters and possibly a quick sketch of their physical surroundings. The reader is left to find out who the character is and why he does what he does strictly through his dialog with other characters. In the script, action and movement can only be secondary clues of limited importance as Pinter has cut these to a minimum.

In the memory plays, the characters' own searches for verification are revealed through their shifting memories, but in the early plays, the focus is on memory wars between the characters and the building of suspense and terror. Since Pinter uses the intruder developed in the early plays in combination with a focus on subjective memory in two of the plays discussed in this paper, it is important to briefly note how he develops and uses the intruder in the early plays. Usually, a mysterious stranger tries to invade the sanctuary of a room and establish himself there by mentally breaking down its occupants. The characters in the room devise "the past as it might have been" to give them refuge from intrusion, for the intruder cannot be harmful in a reality that he does not belong in. A standard model of this reality formation in Pinter's early plays, which are called "comedies of menace," is as follows.

A character is confronted by a person(s) that he has known before but has not seen for some time. Both will begin to discuss an event(s) that they both have some knowledge of and may have been involved with. There are usually two or more versions of how this event happened; one version will emerge as the dominant one. If the intruder's story is dominant,

that is, if his story is finally accepted by the occupant(s) of the room, then the invasion will have been successful. On the other hand, if the person(s) in the room maintain their recollections intact, then the invasion will have been repelled.

The first play in this series is The Room, which Pinter wrote in "four days, working in the afternoons between morning rehearsals of one play and evening performances of another. . . ."[6] Though this play shows the establishment of his themes of menace and verification, Pinter, perhaps due to haste, has not yet reached a workable balance between clarity and obscurity. He gives the audience nothing to latch on to in order to begin its analysis of the characters and seems to be more concerned with horror and shock than with balance.

Rose, a middle-aged woman, is terrified of a mysterious stranger lurking in the basement below her, who turns out to be a man called Riley, a blind old Negro. Riley wants Rose to come home to her family, and he hints that he may be her father. Bert, Rose's husband, comes in and kills Riley, and Rose goes blind. The play is all buildup and no climax. Pinter does a good job in getting the audience interested in the strange hidden man in the basement, but Riley is the last person expected, for it is difficult to see why a blind old Negro would be sinister. In only a few minutes at the end of the play, Riley tries to tell the audience, in an indirect way, why Rose is so horrified, but the audience is given nothing but speculation as to what is so sinister about Rose's

family whether it be Black, White, Indian, or whatever that would cause Rose to be horrified at returning.

The problem of having no possibility of verification is remedied somewhat in Pinter's next play, The Birthday Party. Goldberg and McCann are intruders that are more clearly identified; from their dialog, one can form the impression that they are members of some organization that is seeking to find Stanley. In part, these two justify Stanley's fear of them by the Gestapo-like rapid-fire questions that they use to break down his mind. Here, though one never knows specifically what they represent, Goldberg and McCann present a much more realistic view of what an intruder should be like than Riley does.

The Caretaker, first presented in 1960, marks the first time that an intruder is repulsed. It is the story of a tramp, Davies, who tries to force his way into the house of two brothers so that he can live there as a parasite. He tries to impress them with the things that he has done in the past and says that he has papers in a nearby town that will prove who he is. He continues to make excuses for not going to get the papers and tries to play the brothers against each other, hoping to ally himself with the stronger in order to fix himself permanently in the house; but he underestimates the brothers' close feelings for each other and ends up out in the cold.

In The Caretaker, Pinter is beginning to play with the idea of a fabricated memory being used to gain influence. As

we shall see later, Pinter uses the basic form of The Caretaker in a more sophisticated way in the later memory play No Man's Land.

When The Homecoming came out in 1965, the menace of the intruder had changed. Instead of the brutal destruction of a character by an intruder, or vice-versa, a mutually beneficial arrangement is reached. A woman is given a position of usefulness and importance that she wants while her husband's family regains the lost mother figure that they have been longing for.

Landscape, because it represents a shift in focus, can be seen as the first of the true memory plays. In these plays, the intruder has either disappeared or has diminished in importance, and Pinter has chosen to focus upon character delineation through a character's own interpretation of past events. The last two memory plays considered here, Old Times and No Man's Land, combine the aspects of memory explored in Landscape, Silence, and Night with the theme of menace seen in the earlier plays.

In reading the memory plays as opposed to seeing them performed, one must imagine the tone and style in which the dialog is presented in order to properly weigh the reactions of the other characters, the significance of the pauses and silences, and other stories about the same content. In the following sections, I will present interpretations which give a general character definition based on the dialog of the character and/or the structure of the play, but it must be pointed out that the nature and loose structure of all of Pinter's

plays leave them open to many other interpretations. For because the delineation of a character's profile in these plays is highly subjective, a reader's own manner of thinking and recalling memories will tend to shade the interpretation.

I. Landscape

Landscape, on the surface, appears to be the simultaneous relation of two separate stories by two characters who show no reaction to each other's words; but Pinter is trying to show that, for whatever the reason, a total retreat into a memory causes a person to think of that memory as more alive than the present reality. Throughout the play, Beth, a woman in her forties, is relating an account of a love affair from the distant past, while the man, Duff, who is in his fifties and probably Beth's husband, speaks mainly about occurrences of the recent past. Beth never responds directly to anything Duff says, even though he seems to be trying, unsuccessfully, to invite some response to his own rambling discourse, for he wants her to see the present as real again.

Beth and Duff are in the kitchen of the house of their former employer, Mr. Sykes, who has died and apparently left them the house. During the time of the play, they never move from the kitchen, suggesting the possibility that they are unsure of where to go or what to do now that their employer is dead. In fact, Duff states, "I've thought of inviting one or two people I know from the village in here for a bit of a drink once or twice but I decided against it. It's not necessary."[7] Possibly Duff is still unsure of the advisability of bringing his friends into the house of a man of means like Mr. Sykes.

From their long stay in the kitchen, it may also be assumed that they are unsure whether they should continue to maintain the condition of the house as it was when Sykes was alive. That their indecision has been going on for a long time is suggested by Duff's remarks that "the dust is bad" and "there's moths" in the house (p. 191). Then, too, Beth's relation of past events separates her from present concerns, and Duff has spent the day previous to the one in which the play takes place walking in the park and going to a pub rather than tending the house.

Duff is faced with a double problem. Not only has he lost an employer to give him directions, but he seems to have lost the ability to communicate directly with Beth. She is uninterested in what Duff has to say about his activities. Instead, her dialog consists of a disjointed, nonlinear memory of an old love affair.

Beth never gives a name to her lover. He could be Duff as he was in earlier days, or he could be Mr. Sykes. If he is Sykes, then the memory could be a reaction on her part to his death; she is reacting to her loss of direction by retreating into the past instead of going for walks and to the pub, as Duff does. Pinter himself believes that the lover is a younger Duff. In a letter to the director of the first German production of the play, he states:

> The man on the beach is Duff. I think there are elements of Mr. Sykes in her memory of this Duff which she might be attributing to Duff, but the man remains Duff. I think that Duff detests and is jealous of Mr. Sykes, although I do not

> believe that Mr. Sykes and Beth were ever lovers.[8]

Although Pinter did not want this information published, he has given an interpretation that can be validated from the dialog.[9]

An insight into Beth's nature can be seen by observing the way that she remembers her lover. It can be seen that her emotions are very important to her; she tries to recapture the tender, sensual feeling of the experience, sacrificing the concrete details. An example of this occurs when she remembers asking her lover if he would like to have a child. She recalls asking, but cannot remember exactly what the scene was like. She was on the beach, and there were several other women that heard her ask.

> . . . Two women looked at me, turned and stared. No. I was walking, they were still. I turned. (p. 178)

Later in the play, she again asks her lover about having a child. It is impossible to tell whether this is a different scene or another stab at trying to get the details on the beach right.

> There wasn't a soul on the beach. Except for an elderly man, far away on a breakwater. I lay down beside him and whispered. Would you like a baby? Of our own? Would be nice. (p. 185)

She is not even sure about the man on the breakwater. In another view of him, he is just a pinpoint on the horizon, so how could she tell how old he was?

Beth may recognize that she is having difficulty in remembering the exact memory. At any rate, Pinter, through

Beth, makes a metaphor for the difficulty of recollection.

> I drew a face in the sand, then a body. The body of a woman. Then the body of a man, close to her, not touching. But they didn't look like anything. They didn't look like human figures. The sand kept on slipping, mixing the contours. I crept close to him and put my head on his arm and closed my eyes. All those darting red and black flecks, under my eyelid. . . . I buried my face in his side and shut the light out. (p. 188)

The light of consciousness in the present serves to muddle her memory. The woman and the man do not touch because she cannot remember the feeling that came with that touch. She buries her head in his side in order to shut out the light (the present) so that she can recapture the feeling, but the light remains, in the form of darting flecks.

Beth further describes her feelings about the nature of memory in describing shadow and light in art.

> I remembered always, in drawing, the basic principles of shadow and light. Objects intercepting the light casts shadows. Shadow is deprivation of light. The shape of the shadow is determined by that of the object. But not always. Not always directly. Sometimes it is only indirectly affected by it. Sometimes the cause of the shadow cannot be found. (pp. 195-196)

The object would be the actual event, and the shadow would be the memory of the event. Sometimes the shadow (memory) is in a shape so that the object (event) can no longer be distinguished. Pinter seems to be suggesting that, with time, a memory develops its own pattern that may be entirely different from the event that gave birth to it.

Beth's effort to remember the gentle feelings of her affair is set in contrast to the plainer, coarser speech of Duff. Unlike Beth, he remembers things in concrete detail, but the things that he remembers happened recently. There is no evidence to show how his long-term memory works. Since he does not seem to have any difficulty remembering details, possibly he invents details for things that he really does not remember clearly or at all.

Duff is trying to get Beth to come back to the present and speak to him. Since he has lost Mr. Sykes, he seems to need someone to talk to. He is not comfortable inviting his friends to the house, and the people at the pub have other problems.[10]

Duff seems to think that her interest in him will bring Beth back to him.

> Do you like me to talk to you?
> Pause
> Do you like me to tell you about the things I've been doing?
> Pause
> About all the things I've been thinking?
> Pause
> Mmmnn?
> Pause
> I think you do. (p. 189)

But if he had truly been listening to Beth, he would have seen that she is interested in her own reactions, not in his.

He tries to get her to remember the two of them with Mr. Sykes.

> Mr. Sykes took us from the very first interview, didn't he?
> Pause
> He said I've got the feeling that you'll make a very good team. Do you

> remember? And that's what we proved to be. No question. I could drive well, I could polish his shoes well, I earned my keep. Turn my hand to anything. . . .. (p. 188)

Probably Duff would have failed to elicit a response from Beth even if she had been listening to him. He mentions that they were a great team, but he fails to list any accomplishments that Beth may have had. The pauses in both of the preceding dialogs are significant because they show that he is waiting for a response from her.

Though Duff is not paying attention to Beth's need for compassion, still there are a few times when he seems to take his cue for subject matter from Beth.

> Beth: I'd been in the sea.
> Duff: Maybe it's something to do with the fishing. Getting to learn more about fish. (p. 182)

But after Beth's first attempt to describe her version of the beautiful beach scene, Duff in sharp contrast coarsely describes the setting of the park that he had visited the previous day.

> Mind you, there was a lot of shit all over the place, all over the paths, by the pond. Dogshit, duckshit...all kinds of shit...all over the paths. The rain didn't clean it up. It made it even more treacherous. (p. 180)

Duff however also remembers a time when he was gentle with Beth, though he does not follow up on it with more gentleness, perhaps because he doesn't get an immediate response from Beth. He describes what happened after he

confessed having an affair with another woman.

> I was very gentle to you. I was kind to you, that day. I knew you'd had a shock, so I was gentle with you. I held your arm on the way back from the pond. You put your hands on my face and kissed me. (p. 190)

He says that he was gentle "that day" which implies that such feelings are an exception for him.

Toward the end of the play, Duff shifts to shock tactics. He has been unable to snap Beth out of her memory and may be approaching frustration. He first tries to scold Beth for neglecting her responsibilities.

> It's bullshit. Standing in an empty hall banging a bloody gong. There's no one to listen. No one'll hear. There's not a soul in the house. Except me. There's nothing for lunch. There's nothing cooked. No stew. No pie. No greens. No joint. Fuck all. (p. 196)

But she is not responding to anything he says, anything he thinks is important, and he has shown that he is not interested in her affair on the beach or her feelings. Instead he wants her to respond to him and speak in such a way that his ego is reinforced.

His frustration turns to cruelty as he describes a brutal rape of Beth which may or may not have happened. Possibly this rape is a fantasy that Duff has created to punish her for the insult of not speaking to him. On the other hand, if this rape really happened, then it might explain why Beth has withdrawn into her memory of

a gentler love affair; with her mind in shock, she could have chosen this way to escape Duff.

Duff is probably frustrated because Sykes is dead; when the man was alive, Duff's life was complete. Now he is faced with the problem of re-establishing a relationship with Beth, whom he probably progressively ignored as he became more involved with his work. At one time he probably was the man on the beach or just like him. Now he has changed with age and cannot understand why Beth will not talk with him. Beth has been shocked into the recognition that she is no longer living with the man on the beach, be he Duff or Sykes, and is trying to tell Duff that she wants desperately to be with that man again. But the two people have grown too far apart; Duff will not change himself or even make an attempt to see things from Beth's point of view, while Beth, with her inability to deal in the concrete, cannot plainly tell Duff what she wants.

All this is seen in the two interspliced monologs which in themselves suggest two people who no longer have any relationship with one another. Though they share the same room, they do not listen, they do not respond, they live in different times, and they have different concerns. To show them communicating in a conventional dialog would suggest a community and relationship denied by the facts of what they say or remember or care about.

II. Silence

Silence can be considered as a sister play to Landscape in that both plays have the same central subject, a woman remembering her past loves. In Silence, however, the lovers are on stage and sometimes carry on a dialog with the girl, Ellen, who is in her twenties. The men are Rumsey, who is in his forties, and Bates, who is in his mid-thirties. Their dialog is necessary as Ellen is even more vague than Beth in remembering the exact details of what has happened. She and the men remember quick flashes of scenes that have remained with them. The complete stories are never given, and what is given is sketchily presented in a lyrical form. Furthermore the reader must get as much information as possible from the first part of the play as the last part is a montage of lines used in the first part. Even the physical setting of the play is bare; each person sits on a stool in a lighted area.

The incompleteness of Ellen's memory may be due to the fact that she was a child developing into a woman at the time. She had not yet developed the maturity to clearly organize her thoughts; and, being in her twenties at the start of the play, she may have had much time and experience separating her from the experiences that she is

remembering. That she was a child at the time is supported by the dialog of Rumsey and Bates; they each speak to her as if she were a child.

Ellen herself recognizes that she cannot recall clearly. She states to a woman drinking friend:

> . . . I'm never sure that what I remember is of to-day or of yesterday or of a long time ago.
>
> And then often it is only half things I remember, half things, beginnings of things.[11]

Rumsey and Bate's dialogs are also just as incomplete as Ellen's, which brings up the possibility that they are in part projections of her mind. Pinter may have made them real on the stage to show the contrast between themselves and Ellen, for she has no external and present person to speak with, as Beth does with Duff.

From the dialog, it can be deduced that Ellen is in love with the older Rumsey, but he forces her to find a younger man.

> Rumsey: Find a younger man.
> Ellen: There aren't any.
> Rumsey: Don't be stupid.
> Ellen: I don't like them.
> Rumsey: You're stupid.
> Ellen: I hate them.
> Pause
> Rumsey: Find one.
> Silence (p. 212)

The silence at the end is significant in that Rumsey has said his piece and has nothing more to say on the subject, much like a father handling a disobediant child objecting

to eating her vegetables. Rumsey may be trying to get her to go to a younger man because their relationship is changing into something he does not want. When he speaks to and about Ellen, it is as if he is speaking to his young daughter instead of to a lover. He seems to enjoy telling her about the mysterious things that children ask about, such as why an object gets larger when one approaches it, and he enjoys helping her on with her raincoat; the Ellen that he describes seems very young and innocent. In telling her to find a younger man, he may feel that the father-daughter relationship is in danger of ending, and he wants to remember her as she was.

Bates is the younger man that Ellen possibly has a relationship with. The details of their association are unverifiable; Ellen never confirms or denies any of the details that Bates presents. Bates' character is similar to Duff's in that he is coarse and realistic. He describes a seduction scene that is reminiscent of Duff's, though it is not quite as violent. Like Duff, Bates may be inventing the whole scene out of frustration because Ellen will not give him what he wants. She rejects him in the following scene.

Bates: Will we meet to-night?
Ellen: I don't know.
Pause
Bates: Come with me to-night.
Ellen: Where?
Bates: Anywhere. For a walk.
Pause
Ellen: I don't want to walk.

Bates: Why not?
Pause
Ellen: I want to go somewhere else.
Pause
Bates: Where?
Ellen: I don't know.
Pause
Bates: What's wrong with a walk?
Ellen: I don't want to walk.
Pause
Bates: What do you want to do?
Ellen: I don't know.
Pause
Bates: Do you want to go anywhere else?
Ellen: Yes.
Bates: Where?
Ellen: I don't know.
Pause
Bates: Do you want me to buy you a drink?
Ellen: No.
Pause
Bates: Come for a walk.
Ellen: No.
Pause
Bates: All right. I'll take you on a bus to the town. I know a place. My cousin runs it.
Ellen: No.
Silence (pp. 205-207)

Ellen may not want to walk because it would remind her of her walks with Rumsey, and Bates may have found out that Ellen is not going to be as easy to seduce as some other women he has known. His seduction scene starts with his taking Ellen to town to his cousin's place. Possibly he did take her to town and started a relationship with her. For Ellen mentions marriage to a woman friend. "My drinking companion . . . asked me if I'd ever been married. This time I told her I had. Certainly. I can remember the wedding (p. 214)." She may be remembering an

actual wedding or a young girl's wish for a wedding; the two may not be distinguishable to her.

Whether married or not, Ellen has spent some time away from Rumsey and the country. A scene describes a reunion between them.

> Rumsey: Can you remember...when you were here last?
> Ellen: Oh, yes.
> Rumsey: You were a little girl.
> Ellen: I was. (p. 209)

Ellen has grown up in many ways. She could not remain young and innocent with Bates. For note his view of children.

> Once I had a little girl. I took it for walks. I held it by its hand. It looked up at me and said, I see something in a tree, a shape, a shadow. It is leaning down. It is looking at us.
>
> Maybe it's a bird, I said, a big bird, resting. (p. 208)

Here Bates is using the pronoun <u>it</u> to refer to both the girl and the bird. To him the girl does not deserve the feminine gender; he is more interested in a woman. Bates' preceding monolog could also be taken as an expression of his frustration at being rejected by Ellen. Perhaps as compensation, he takes away her gender.

Bates has another reason for being frustrated, and Rumsey is also somewhat hindered for the same reason; they are beginning to feel the effects of age. They may be intensely preoccupied with Ellen because their memories of her represent a way to redeem their lost youth. Bates

may be referring to this in the midst of an annoying encounter with some younger men.

> I'm at my last gasp with this unendurable racket. I kicked open the door and stood before them. Someone called me Grandad and told me to button it. It's they should button it. Were I young...
>
> One of them told me I was lucky to be alive, that I would have to bear it in order to pay for being alive, in order to give thanks for being alive.
>
> . . . I'm strong, but not as strong as the bastards in the other room, and their tittering bitches, and their music and their love. (pp. 203-204)

To Bates, then, Ellen could be a counter to show these younger men that he still has his manliness and sexual ability. Even though he is old, in younger men's eyes, he would be able to parade around with a younger woman, another reason why he wants Ellen as a woman instead of a child.

Meanwhile, Bates with some contradiction tries to show the world that he really does not need to love or be loved, and he tries to convince himself of the same thing. When his landlady asks him some rather pointed questions about his emotional life, he brushes them off.

> My landlady asks me in for a drink. Stupid conversation. Why do you live alone? Where do you come from? What do you do with yourself? . . . Has there been no pleasantness in your life? No kind of loveliness in your life? Are you nothing but a childish old man, suffocating himself?

> I've had all that. I've got all that.
> I said. (p. 211)

He then tries probably with some bitterness to rationalize the activities of the younger men as unimportant.

> From the young people's room--silence.
> Sleep? Tender love?
> It's of no importance.
> Silence (p. 213)

From these passages, it seems as if Bates has had Ellen, then lost her, or he has failed to win her at all. He may also be fighting to regain his feelings of self-worth and competency.

Rumsey's fear of old age may be buffered by his memories of Ellen as a little girl. Once, he expresses a fear of abandonment, but then dismisses it.

> . . . I shall walk down to my horse
> and see how my horse is. He'll come
> towards me.
>
> Perhaps he doesn't need me. My visit,
> my care, will be like any other visit,
> any other care. I can't believe it.
> (p. 207)

When Ellen comes back for their reunion, she slips back into the role of a little girl, possibly to remember a time when she was truly happy.

> Rumsey: Look at your reflection.
> Ellen: Where?
> Rumsey: In the window.
> Ellen: It's very dark outside.
> Rumsey: It's high up.
> Ellen: Does it get darker the higher
> you get?
> Rumsey: No. (p. 210)

She reverts to a question a child would ask about dark-

ness. Rumsey shows no regret at having forced Ellen to find a younger man. From the previous passage, it can be seen that Rumsey still has the power to mentally send Ellen back to her childhood.

Rumsey is able to do this because Ellen is still unsure in her mind about her age. She still seems very dependent, though she realizes that she has physically aged.

> . . . Am I silent or speaking? How can I know? Can I know such things? No-one has ever told me. I need to be told things. I seem to be old. Am I old now? No-one will tell me. I must find a person to tell me these things. (p. 211)

Ellen, then, seems to be searching for a direction in her life; from her background, she is used to men telling her what to do. She can no longer turn to Rumsey for support because he has forced her out and is wrapped up in his own memory of her as a child. She knows that she has grown into a woman, and that fact needs some attention; Rumsey can still mentally comfort her as a child, but she is probably aware that she needs more now. Bates too seems to have deserted her, or has been deserted by her as the dialog with the landlady implies. Her child-like mind rejects his rough advances, and he has rejected her because she does not fit his stereotyped image of a "tittering bitch" which he needs to prove his virility to the younger men.

The structure of the play reflects Ellen's confused state of mind. There is no time sequence, and the events

described are nothing but flashes of memory which degenerate into a confusion of repetition at the end. But instead of describing Ellen as confused, Pinter has gone into her mind to show the confusion at work. No clear interpretations of happenings can occur in the play because none exist in her mind.

III. Night

Night is a short review sketch that was first performed in 1969. Since the work does not end with alienation, like all of Pinter's other plays, he may be trying to show that differences in memory and desires between couples do not always end in tragedy. In the sketch, a man and a woman in their forties are remembering their first meeting, but their versions of this meeting are different. The tone is light, and they do not outwardly show that their remembering is anything more than a game. The man and the woman are similar to Beth and Duff in nature; that is, the woman is more emotional and spiritual in her view of the meeting while the man remembers the physical satisfaction of the meeting; but they have not, as have Beth and Duff, become so firmly entrenched in their personal memories that they cannot recognize that the other person may also have a valid interpretation.

The man and the woman are remembering a meeting that they both have some common knowledge about. They agree that they met at a party given by a couple named Doughty, and that the man knew Mrs. Doughty. This is set in contrast to the situation that Duff and Beth are in, where Duff does

not mention anything about the beach, let alone a love affair there, and Beth never mentions the everyday things that Duff is interested in.

Pinter shows that the man and the woman are in a situation where a serious conflict could develop. The man remembers their first meeting as being very sexually gratifying for him. He recalls it as follows.

> We stopped on a bridge. I stood behind you. I put my hand under your coat, onto your waist. You felt my hand on you.
>
> . . . On the bridge. I felt your breasts. . . . I put my hands under your sweater, I undid your brassiere, I felt your breasts. [12]

The woman remembers a more spiritual, loving relationship, dismissing the man's version as being "another night perhaps" with "another girl"(p. 225). She describes her first impression of him in the following way.

> . . . I thought you were quite courtly, quite courteous, pleasantly mannered, quite caring. I slipped my coat on and looked, knowing you were waiting. I looked down over the garden to the river, and saw the lamp on the water. Then I joined you and we walked down the road through railings into a field, must have been some kind of park. (p. 225)

After this romantic setting, she goes on to directly contradict the man's story of what happened on the railing. He says that he came up behind her and undid her coat, and she says,

> But my back was against railings. I felt the railings..behind me. You were facing me. I was looking into your eyes. My coat was closed. It was cold. (p. 226)

The argument, though appearing to be leading to a serious conflict, is kept light, and the wife begins to move toward a compromise. She is not so wrapped up in her romantic feelings as to be unaware of the pleasures of physical sex. Though she does not wish to remember in purely physical terms as the man does, she does acknowledge his feelings.

> Man: . . . I felt your breasts.
> Woman: I wondered whether you would, whether you wanted to, whether you would.
> Man: Yes.
> Woman: I wondered how you would go about it, whether you wanted to, sufficiently. (p. 225)

At the end of the sketch, the man and the woman blend their versions, but neither admits that the other has the definitive story about what went on. They rationalize that the versions are different because the memory of their first meeting has blended with memories of other meetings with other lovers, and blame for confusing the memories of having other affairs is never stated or implied. They directly state their love for each other.

> Woman: And you had me and you told me that you had fallen in love with me, and you said that you would take care of me always, and you told me my voice and my eyes, my thighs, my breasts, were incomparable, and

that you would adore me always.
Man: Yes I did.
Woman: And you do adore me always.
Man: Yes I do. (p. 226)

They have come to a common ground where they admit that they love each other, and this is more important than the details of a memory. Pinter seems to be saying that a strong love in the present can overcome any difficulties that conflicting memories can bring. The man and the woman can let each other have his or her interpretation of an event; there is no need for these memories to be used in a competition for dominance.

Woman: And then we had children and we sat and talked and you remembered women on bridges and towpaths and rubbish dumps.
Man: And you remembered your bottom against railings and men holding your hands and men looking into your eyes. (p. 226)

The incidents in this sketch also point out the immaturity of Ellen and Bates. If Bates had recognized that Ellen was more than a one night stand with more to offer than those other women, and if Ellen had attempted to see beyond Bates' rough exterior, they could have had as satisfying a relationship as the man and the woman. Ellen could have broken with Rumsey leaving him with his memories and gained a man she could depend upon, and Bates could have been secure in the thought of the superiority of his relationship to those of the younger men. But Bates had a firm idea in his mind about what a woman should be like, and Ellen was looking for a Rumsey-

replacement to take care of her.

If the man and the woman had such a secure relationship, then why did they play the memory game in the first place? They may have wanted to reinforce their love for each other by telling the most romantic version of the meeting that they could recall. Stephen Gale gives such an explanation:

> It may . . . be that their memories have been altered by time according to their needs or a desire to produce the tale which seems most romantic to them; they are, of course, a middle-aged couple tied down to getting up early because they "have things to do" in the morning. [13]

Gale's explanation is also helpful in discovering why Beth and Duff are trying to communicate on different levels. Over time, Beth's needs have been neglected by Duff, so she has retreated to a time when they were met. Duff is in a state of chaos because he has lost the man who could fulfill his needs, and he is unable to re-establish a relationship through memory with Beth because it has been too long since they had a common memory. If Duff is the man on the beach, then he has changed to the point where the beach incident is no longer important enough for him to start a common memory with Beth; possibly he has even forgotten about it. Also, if the man on the beach is Sykes, Duff may be showing frustration because Beth remembers loving Sykes instead of him.

Night presents a good contrast for understanding Landscape and Silence. The man and the woman show that

a good loving relationship in the present can serve to keep different memories of the same event from becoming tools for isolation, and the sketch shows that different memories serve to remind a married couple that marriage does not mean a loss of individuality. In the next two plays, Old Times and No Man's Land, however, Pinter shows just how powerful subjective interpretation of an event can be as a tool of menace against someone who is or is thought to be unsure of his or her own memories and relationships.

IV. Old Times

Old Times returns to the theme of menace, but Pinter has incorporated his explorations into the nature of memory. The play concerns a reunion between a man and wife, Deeley and Kate, who are being visited by Kate's old roommate, Anna, for the first time in twenty years. At first the characters seem to be having a pleasant reunion after a long separation, but the comradship quickly develops into a serious confrontation between Deeley and Anna for complete control of the affections of Kate. On the surface, it appears that Deeley and Anna are remembering events in the way that most people at a reunion do; a memory is slanted so that the speaker is put into a favorable light, and the others do not object too much; however, in this case, Deeley and Anna are openly trying to discredit each other's memories in order to win Kate's undivided attention. Apparently they believe that she is incapable of fully remembering the events that they are relating and so is open to accepting one of their versions.

The memories that Deeley and Anna use are, as in previous Pinter plays, unverifiable. But since they are being used to destroy another character's influence, they presumably have some basis in truth which is then

elaborated upon. Gale emphasizes that "whatever the 'truth' of the past may be, the reality that the characters react to is the one which they are spontaneously inventing."[14] And since Deeley and Anna believe that Kate will be influenced by the most convincing versions of what happened twenty years before, they believe that they themselves must be convinced of the "truth" of what they say. Anna makes the comment,

> There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place.[15]

Eventually Kate makes it clear to Deeley and Anna that they are wrong in believing that she has no personal memory of the events they are discussing. She even uses their own game of memory-invention to remember Anna as being dead and Deeley as being another sexual variation for her. She devastates them because they had made her the focal point of their game; now their menace is defused because she has refused to submit. They might just as well have kept the reunion friendly. Kate's resistance to the manipulations of Deeley and Anna, which she had appeared to be submitting to, is explained by Barbara Kreps: "the individual is ultimately incapable of being touched by any world that is not self-defined. Shared time is a myth. And because of that fact, everything that is shared in it is also a myth."[16] Deeley and Anna's flaw is their inability to recognize that Kate might see through their mythmaking and merely play along with them to see how far

they would go. She in turn may have put a stop to it because she believed that they were more involved with the game than with her.

To understand why Deeley and Anna corrupt a reunion and turn it into a battleground, we must examine the motivation behind their game. Deeley's motivation can be seen in the dialog that he has with Kate while Anna waits in a lighted area looking out of a window but not hearing them. Deeley questions Kate about Anna in a way that is reminiscent of Rose asking Mr. Kidd about the man in the basement or Stanley asking Meg about the two strangers that she has invited to the hotel. This pre-appearance interrogation serves to build up the audience's curiosity about the intruder as well as give an insight into the questioner's fears.

As Deeley continues to probe Kate for information about Anna, he shows that he is anxious about Anna's visit; but her answers are vague and uninformative, showing either that she is not really too concerned about the visit or that she is playing with Deeley's anxieties.

Deeley: . . . Was she your best friend?
Kate: Oh, what does that mean?
Deeley: What?
Kate: The word friend...when you look back...all that time.
Deeley: Can't you remember what you felt? Pause
Kate: It is a very long time.
Deeley: But you remember her. She remembers you. Or why would she be coming here tonight?
Kate: I suppose because she remembers me.

Deeley: Do you <u>think</u> of her as your best friend?
Kate: She was my only friend.
Deeley: Your best and only.
Kate: My one and only.
<u>Pause</u>
If you have only one of something you can't say it's the best of anything. (pp. 8-9)

Kate's ambiguity about her present feelings toward Anna does not alleviate Deeley's anxiety, and she may be intensifying it by her last statement about the difficulty of comparison; Deeley may interpret her as meaning he cannot be evaluated as a husband to Kate because she has had only one. Deeley may feel in short that he has no advantage by being married to Kate; for after the previous speech, he still is not sure where Anna stands in Kate's affections. Thus he feels the need to prove to Kate that his relationship with her is more important than a relationship with someone that she has not seen for twenty years.

He is so tied to his fears that he cannot see that they are groundless. He can not see that Kate is playing with him.

Deeley: Does <u>she</u> have many friends?
Kate: Oh...the normal amount, I suppose.
Deeley: Normal? What's normal? You had none.
Kate: One.
Deeley: Is that normal?
<u>Pause</u>
She...had quite a lot of friends, did she?
Kate: Hundreds. (p. 15)

Later, Deeley does appreciate that his anxieties may be

a disadvantage to him, so he tries to regain his composure by saying, "Anyway, none of this matters" (p. 17).

Anna's motivation for playing the game with Deeley is not clear. Perhaps she is unhappy and wishes to regain the feelings that she and Kate had. Or she may have come for a normal reunion and becomes annoyed with Deeley's behavior because he was making a parody of memories that she enjoyed. Her explanation of her purpose for visiting supports both possibilities.

> I would like you to understand that I came here not to disrupt but to celebrate. Pause To celebrate a very old and treasured friendship, something that was forged between us long before you knew of our existance. . . . All I wanted for her was her happiness. That is all I want for her still. (pp. 68-69)

Perhaps Anna is more aggressive in the game because she does not have as much to lose as Deeley. A relationship that has been dormant for twenty years would seem to be less important than one that was continuing in the present. Or Anna may be aggressive because she knows that she would have to be in order to revive the relationship, though if she were too aggressive, she might lose Kate; but if Anna is to be believed, win or lose she still has some kind of relationship with her husband in Italy. Deeley would lose everything if he lost Kate; unlike Duff, he is not totally involved with his work even though he tries to give the impression that he is. For if Sykes had been alive, Duff would probably have let Beth go off with a girlfriend with little hesitation.

In their memory war, Deeley and Anna uses several methods to gain Kate's complete attention. One method is to make the other's story seem completely unimportant or incredible. When Anna first enters, she is describing the London that she and Kate knew, to which Deeley replies, "We rarely get to London"(p. 18). By making a scene in London about as relevant as a scene on the moon, Deeley attempts to defuse Anna's superiority. Later when Deeley recreates the first meeting between himself and Kate, setting himself up as a hero rescuing Kate from a theatre where two lesbian usherettes are making obscene gestures to the screen, implying that Anna was one of the usherettes, Anna attempts to make the theatre incident seem unimportant by listing it in the last sentence of a paragraph describing the many wonderful things that she and Kate had done during a day in London--she does not even mention whether Deeley was in the theatre or not. Deeley and Anna also try to make each other's stories seem incredible. In this method, the memory is not presented in one block; it is presented detail by detail--which shows a spontaneous invention going on. Sandwiched in between the details is information bringing to Kate's attention and/or the fabricator's attention the fact that the story is being invented and cannot be taken as the truth. This method is noticeable when Anna describes the time that Deeley was in Kate and Anna's room and when Deeley tells Anna about remembering her as a prostitute in a tavern.

Another method that Deeley uses is to focus upon one word that Anna says and thus shift Kate's attention away from the meaning of her entire idea.

> Deeley: My work takes me away quite often, of course. But Kate stays here.
> Anna: No one who lived here would want to go far, I would be afraid of going far, lest when I returned, the house would be gone.
> Deeley: Lest?
> Anna: What?
> Deeley: The word lest. Haven't heard it for a long time. (p. 19)

Deeley repeats this structure with the word "gaze" later on. In each case, he breaks Anna's train of thought as well as giving the impression that he really is not listening to her. He may be trying to suggest to Kate that she and Anna have nothing more in common.

Also Deeley and Anna sing lines from songs that were popular at the time that Kate and Anna were together. In this impromptu singing match, each singer chooses lines that mirror his or her affection for Kate. The whole affair starts with Kate's casually asking Anna if they had a copy of a particular song, but what seems on the surface to be a spontaneous and nostalgic "entertainment" turns out to be a conflict for possession.

When Kate teases Deely by giving Anna a false sense of victory by engaging in the kind of conversation that she and Anna might have had in the old days, Anna, sensing that she is winning, eagerly supports her end of the conversation.

To divert Kate's attention when she seems to be too actively interested in what Anna is saying, Deeley tries the tactic of using nonsense.

> Deeley: I had a great crew in Sicily. A marvellous cameraman. . . . I wrote the film and directed it. My name is Orson Welles.
> Kate: (To Anna) Do you drink orange juice on your terrace in the morning, and bullshots at sunset, and look down at the sea?
> Anna: Sometimes, yes.
> Deeley: As a matter of fact I am at the top of my profession, as a matter of fact, and I have indeed been associated with substantial numbers of articulate and sensitive people, mainly prostitutes of all kinds.
> Kate: (To Anna) And do you like the Sicilian people? (pp. 42-43)

Deeley may do this because he is too agitated to come up with a logical fabrication. For at another point when Anna asks him why he is so upset, he evades the question by saying that he is worried about Anna's husband having no one to take care of him and interpret English for him. This is illogical because the man is supposedly rich enough to have servants and he does not need an English interpreter in his native land. Kate renews her teasing possibly because his behavior is beginning to bother her also. For example, when he speaks of having better things to do than continue the conversation, she states,

> Kate: (Swiftly) If you don't like it go.
> Deeley: Go? Where can I go?

Kate: To China. Or Sicily.
Deeley: I haven't got a speedboat. I haven't got a white dinner jacket.
Kate: China then.
Deeley: You know what they'd do to me in China if they found me in a white dinner jacket? They'd bloodywell kill me. You know what they're like over there. (pp. 67-68)

Deeley's nonsensical response to Kate suggests that he was caught off guard by her; he never expected Kate to abandon him. Possibly he uses the nonsense to trick Anna into believing that he is weakening.

When Deeley comes to believe that Anna has managed, despite him, to present herself in a favorable light to Kate, he attempts to counter that influence by declaring what he himself found delightful in Anna was her resemblance to Kate (perhaps it was their shared underwear). But at this point, Kate, for several reasons, decides that it is time to end the game; she feels that she is becoming too much the object-to-be-possessed; Anna, she may feel, has been trying to steal Deeley from her, or she may feel that Deeley has been punished enough for having unnecessary fears about their relationship. At any rate, she now knows that she is a person, with the same capabilities of memory fabrication that Deeley and Anna have. If Anna feels that she has won Kate as a dependant, Kate will disabuse her by showing that she cannot be dependent on Anna if Anna is dead. So, in great detail, she describes seeing Anna as a corpse in the room that they shared. Then after a slight

pause, she describes how she tried to symbolically make Deeley into a corpse in the same room, showing him that she is not dependent upon him either, but she says that she was unsuccessful in making him into a corpse which may indicate that she still loves him.

> . . . He would not let me dirty his face, or smudge it, he wouldn't let me. He suggested a wedding instead, and a change of environment.
> Slight Pause
> Neither mattered.
> Pause
> He asked me once, at about that time, who had slept in the bed before him. I told him no one. No one at all. (p. 73)

The last lines of the preceding excerpt are meant to put to rest any fears that Deeley might have about Anna and Kate having been lesbians. The possibility of such a relationship is seen most clearly when Anna and Deeley are discussing Kate's after-bath care. They argue about who should dry her; Deeley wants Anna to do it to see if she actually will in order to confirm his fear that they were lovers, and Anna wants Deeley to dry her because she does not want to confirm or deny the fact. Deeley seems relieved when Kate enters after drying herself, but he is still angry because he still does not know at this point whether or not they were lovers.

> Deeley: You say that she was Brontë in secrecy but not in passion. What was she like in passion?
> Anna: I feel that is your province.
> Deeley: You feel it's my province? Well you're damn right. It is my

> province. I'm glad someone's showing a bit of taste at last. Of course it's my bloody province. I'm her husband. (p. 66)

In Old Times Pinter is showing that too strong a personal interpretation of an event can cause a person to recognize a myth for what it is and thus not be influenced by it. The strength of such a personal interpretation can be judged by the effect of other interpretations upon his or her behavior. It is Deeley and Anna, not Kate, who are shown to have an unclear view of the past. Perhaps Anna's memory had faded with the time, and she did not really know what kind of person Kate had become. Deeley seems unsure of his own memory; certainly he is unsure whether the memories that Kate and Anna have are sufficient to break up his own relationship with Kate. By keeping her in an isolated house, he may be hoping that no one will change the relationship. Kate states that she had only one friend and cannot make any comparisons. One can take that a step further and say that each person only has one set of memories, and the confidence or lack of confidence in the truthfulness and effectiveness of those memories will bring on either anxieties and memory-fabrication or a feeling, like Kate's, that there is no problem in distinguishing between a "true" past occurence and a myth.

V. No Man's Land

No Man's Land was written in 1974, but according to Stephen Gale, Pinter has not forged any new ground with it.

> To start with, it seems almost as if No Man's Land were written before Old Times. While the play may be concerned with the same themes as those developed in Old Times, it is nowhere as lyrical or poetic in the expression of those themes and actually comes closer to the idiom of the playwright's earlier pieces.[17]

Gale may have had The Caretaker in mind when he wrote this because the basic structure and set up of the characters in No Man's Land is similar. In the former, a tramp, Davies, is trying to get established in the house of two brothers, Aston, who is feeble-minded, and Mick, who is strong and knows exactly what the tramp is up to. In the latter, Spooner plays the tramp, Hirst replaces Aston, and Mick's character is split between Foster and Briggs. No Man's Land, however, represents a step forward in that without having written Old Times and the short memory plays before it, Pinter would not have as consciously and deliberately used the power of memory as a weapon against intrusion or expulsion.

The title of the play reminds us of the military term

for the strip of land between two opposing armies that neither can claim for its own. But as applied to the action of this play, there can be a wide variety of interpretations. No man's land can be seen as a sort of purgatory between life and death: Spooner is seen by Thomas Adler as the figure of death crossing over the no man's land into Hirst's life.[18] Possibly the title is referring to the house as a neutral area where Hirst can safely escape from the present and live in his memories. Also, no man's land can be seen as the area between life, whether it is lived in the past or the present, and physical or mental death. Hirst is living his life through his memories until Spooner destroys Hirst's confidence in them, so Briggs and Foster force Hirst into such a no man's land to keep him from going to a death where Hirst would be a Spooner puppet.

No Man's Land is more complex than Old Times in that Pinter is using the style of the play to make the audience feel that Spooner is convincing them as well as Hirst. Spooner, though he is shabbily dressed, speaks with the formal language of a respectable, educated British citizen. Thereby he suggests to the audience someone who can be trusted. But the coarse street language of Foster and Briggs suggests the street hoodlum that causes trouble. Pinter takes into account the audience's stereotyped views of the way the characters are expected to act in order to fool the audience into thinking that Foster and Briggs are the

intruders instead of Spooner--which is just what Spooner wants Hirst to think. Pinter has Briggs and Foster speaking like Goldberg and McCann, and does not imply that they are really better for Hirst than Spooner. In order to show how effective memory-fabrication can be, the audience must be made as unsure as Hirst as to who is the real intruder(s). Since the difference in spoken language does not bother the reader as much because he is not distracted by the sound, it is easier for him to ferret out Spooner's true motives and know that he is the true intruder.

Spooner, like Deeley and Anna, uses several varieties in the memory game, for Hirst, unlike Kate, does not have a firm grasp upon his interpretation of past events and so is open to many attacks. Like Deeley, Spooner tries to put his adversary off guard by falsifying his motives.

> What a remarkably pleasant room. I feel at peace here. Safe from all danger. But please don't be alarmed. I shan't stay long. I never stay long, with others. They do not wish it. And that, for me is a happy state of affairs. . . . To show interest in me or, good gracious, anything tending towards a positive liking of me, would cause in me a condition of the acutest alarm. Fortunately, the danger is remote.[19]

Laying bare his obviously insincere humility and purpose, the rest of the play shows that Spooner really does want the security of Hirst's house. This thinly disguised evasion of true purpose can be seen as similar to Deeley's pretended concern for Anna's husband's welfare as a device

for getting her away from Kate and out of the house. Spooner continues to keep up the image of being free and detached as long as he sees that Hirst still has his wits about him.

> Spooner: . . . I have gone too far, you think?
> Hirst: I'm expecting you to go very much farther.
> Spooner: Really? That doesn't mean I interest you, I hope.
> Hirst: Not in the least.
> Spooner: Thank goodness for that. For a moment my heart sank. (p. 20)

Spooner and Hirst, also like Deeley and Anna, play a game of spontaneous remembering, but here the contest is somewhat different; each man contributes a detail, and they work creatively on a common subject until one man drops out, changes the subject, or is defeated when the memory becomes too painful. Spooner uses this method to break down Hirst; he is probably trying to point out that Hirst is too unstable to function alone--thus creating the advisability of taking on Spooner as a caretaker. At first Hirst is equal to the challenge of discomforting Spooner.

> Spooner: I looked up once into my mother's face. What I saw there was nothing less than pure malevolence. I was fortunate to escape with my life. You will want to know what I had done to provoke such hatred in my own mother.
> Hirst: You'd pissed yourself.
> Spooner: Quite right. How old do you think I was at the time?
> Hirst: Twenty eight.
> Spooner: Quite right. However, I left home soon after. (pp. 26-27)

Spooner then intensifies the game and finds he can turn it against Hirst.

> Spooner: Tell me about your wife?
> Hirst: What wife?
> Spooner: How beautiful she was, how tender and how true. Tell me with what speed she swung in the air, with what velocity she came off the wicket, whether she was responsive to a finger spin, whether you could bowl a shooter with her, or an offbreak with a legbreak action. In other words, did she google?
> Silence
> You will not say. I will tell you then . . . that my wife . . . had everything. Eyes, a mouth, hair, teeth, buttocks, breasts, absolutely everything. And legs.
> Hirst: Which carried her away.
> Spooner: Carried who away? Yours or mine? Pause Is she here now, your wife? Cowering in a locked room, perhaps? Pause Was she ever here? Was she ever there, in your cottage? It is my duty to tell you that you have failed to convince. (pp. 30-31)

Perhaps Hirst is not alert enough to pick up on the suggestive comparing of his wife to a cricket game. But most certainly, Spooner has attacked Hirst in a critical area by implying that Hirst has lost the ability to remember, a telling blow in that Hirst feels that memories are all that are real to him. By causing doubt in Hirst's mind about an event as important as being married and having a wife, he starts to cause Hirst to contemplate a common terror of old age: senility. Later Spooner uses the same tactics

to shatter Hirst's image of an old friend. Hirst enters the room and claims to recognize Spooner as a former friend named Charles Wetherby. They start a dialog of remembrance similar to that of Kate and Anna. The difference here is that Spooner uses the dialog to again discredit Hirst's memory process. He plays a Wetherby that is inconsistent with Hirst's own memory of the man, defaming Wetherby and claiming that Hirst was dangerous because of his sexual perversions.

Hirst reacts to these assaults on his memory exactly the way Spooner wants him to. He is consumed with the fear of losing his memories and dying. He says to Spooner, "Tonight...my friend...you find me in the last lap of a race...I had long forgotten to run"(p. 32). Hirst sees his senility as a no man's land.

> No man's land...does not move...or change ...or grow old...remains...forever... icy...silent. (p. 34)

Spooner uses these moments when Hirst is most confused to offer his services.

> You need a friend. You have a long hike, my lad, up which presently, you slog unfriended. Let me perhaps be your boatman. . . . In other words, never disdain a helping hand, especially one of such rare quality. . . . I offer myself to you as a friend. . . . it is an expression of a quite unique generosity and I make it knowingly. (p. 33)

To keep Hirst in a state of confusion while he offers friendship, Spooner once uses rhymed nonsense to remind Hirst of his supposed senility. Spooner may think that

this type of nonsense will be very effective against a poet, for his ear will be trained to listen for the rhymes.

> Remember this. You've lost your wife of hazel hue, you've lost her and what can you do, she will no more come back to you, with a tillifola tillifoladi-foladi-foloo. (p. 34)

Clearly Spooner would have easily taken control of Hirst if it hadn't been for Foster and Briggs. In a way they can be seen as a younger Hirst and Spooner. Foster, like Hirst, is a poet and sees the house as a sanctuary from the outside world.

> . . . I'm defenceless. I don't carry a gun in London. But I'm not bothered. Once you've done the East you've done it all. I've done the East. But I still like a nice lighthouse like this one. (p. 35)

Unlike Hirst, he is younger and therefore has a stronger definition of his experiences; like Kate, he shows that a strong self-interpretation of memory is a good defense against outside tampering. Yet Foster looks upon Briggs as a protector and guide.

> He is my associate. He was my proposer. I've learnt a great deal from him. He's been my guide. The most unselfish person I've ever met. (p. 87)

Briggs probably saw that Foster was in need of a place to stay and offered him Hirst's house. But Briggs uses verbal threats of physical force rather than memory games to keep control over Foster and Hirst. He may not be capable of using the memory game with the same sophistication that Spooner does, so he relies upon the

threat of physical force, but he also maintains a balance so that while he keeps control in the house he does not have to actually manhandle Foster and Hirst. He knows that verbal threats are sufficient.

> Hirst: No pranks. No mischief. Give me the bottle.
> Briggs: I've refused.
> Hirst: Refusal can lead to dismissal.
> Briggs: You can't dismiss me.
> Hirst: Why not?
> Briggs: Because I won't go.
> Hirst: If I tell you to go, you will go. Give me the bottle.
> Silence
> [Hirst turns to Spooner]
> Bring me the bottle.
> Briggs: . . . I'll have one myself.
> Hirst: What impertinence. Well it doesn't matter. He always was a scallywag. Is it raining? (p. 80)

Hirst knows that he cannot control Briggs, but he has accepted the fact. Perhaps he prefers Briggs' threats to Spooner's devastation tactics.

Foster and Briggs have several methods for dealing with Spooner whom they recognize as an intruder. Foster engages Spooner on his own level with the memory recollection game. Foster lets Spooner know that he is recognized as an intruder by telling the story of a beggar that he met in his travels who, upon being given a coin by Foster, tosses it back in disgust, but the coin disappears into thin air. "Foster's intention seems to be to warn an intruder that he recognizes him as someone to be wary of, for what the tramp returns is worthless,"[20] says Gale. While Spooner, by discussing the technical aspects of the trick,

shows that he knows that Foster is on to his true purpose, he does not directly take on Foster in the game, possibly because he is still unsure of how to deal with him.

Briggs shows Spooner his power by locking him into the room for the night, and by missleading Spooner so that he embarrasses himself in front of Hirst. Briggs lets Spooner believe that Foster needs a patron because Hirst is too busy. Spooner may think at this time that Briggs is a possible ally. For when Foster is wavering because he is feeling that Spooner has more control over Hirst than he had first thought, and turns to Briggs for support, Spooner is probably thinking that Briggs will support his idea to send Foster travelling. But the opposite is true.

> Briggs: Speak? Who to?
> [Foster looks at Spooner]
> Foster: To...him.
> Briggs: To him? To a pisshole collector? To a shithouse operator? To a jamrag vendor? What the fuck are you talking about? Look at him. He's a mingejuice bottler, a fucking shitcake baker. What are you talking to him for? (pp. 87-88)

For Foster and Briggs work most effectively together. Alone, they are unable to shake Hirst's belief that Spooner is his old friend Wetherby who has gone bad and is in need of sympathy. Briggs attempts to degrade Spooner by claiming that he has seen him collecting beermugs at the local tavern. Spooner, hoping to elevate his position in their eyes, explains, "The landlord's a friend of mine. When he's shorthanded, I give him a helping hand"(p. 37). But

Foster now sees that Hirst has just enough clear analytical ability in questioning his own statement to be open to outside influence. So he and Briggs then steer Hirst into a mental no man's land designed just for the three of them. Spooner sees that he has lost because Hirst has locked himself into an eternal present where Spooner cannot tarnish his memories of the past, because they no longer exist, and he cannot establish himself as the new caretaker, because there is no future, so Foster and Briggs remain the caretakers in Hirst's eternal present.

This play continues the themes of Old Times, but something more has been added. Spooner, Foster, and Briggs are trying to get Hirst's undivided attention through memory manipulation as Deeley and Anna are trying to get that of Kate. Hirst, unlike Kate, does need someone to give him support in his memories; he says that his "true friends look out at me from my album"(p. 45). Hirst shows that he has reached a point in his life where he needs the crutch of his album to remember what has happened to him; he forms his memories from objects in a picture book instead of objects in his head. As we see, then, Pinter has incorporated into the style of his play a method for driving home to the audience just how subjective memory works.

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VI. Afterthoughts

Throughout the memory plays, Pinter is exploring the nature of personal confidence in one's own memories. He shows that a person's strength of character depends on his belief in the validity of his experiences. In each of the five memory plays discussed here, the characters became comprehensible when one studies the level of personal confidence that each one has in his or her memories. This confidence is measured by how far each one is willing to be influenced by the personal recollections of others. Specifically, influence is measured by dialog; through the various methods described in this paper, the characters reveal their desires, attitudes, and fears; and, based upon that, their confidences in their own realities are revealed.

Beth has retreated into a time when she felt confident so that now Duff can no longer influence her; she has no confidence in the present and refuses to return to the present to talk to Duff. She feels safe with her memory of the love affair, and in this safety she is immune to anything the Duff in the present can do to her because he does not exist in the memory which has now become her reality.

Duff is so firmly entrenched in the present that he

does not have a memory to go back to. And because his reality is dependent upon what is happening in the present, his ego needs to be constantly reinforced. He is thus frustrated because he can only walk aimlessly in the park and visit the pub without someone in the present to complete his reality and make his work seem important.

Hirst and Ellen too are dependent upon someone else to complete their realities, though Ellen has a clearer idea of what type of person she needs; she knows that she has physically outgrown the reality that Rumsey is offering, and yet she needs someone who will treat her as a woman in a gentler way than Bates does. Hirst shows that he can be manipulated by anyone's reality because he has lost his own; Foster and Briggs put him into a no man's land to save themselves because Spooner probably would have dismissed them if he had control of Hirst. Spooner may have been able to destroy Hirst's photograph album realities so easily because Hirst wished to be able to rely upon his own mind instead of on nameless pictures in a book.

Deeley and Anna sought to confirm their own memories by trying to impose them on Kate. They could not admit to each other that they were insecure because they thought that would cause Kate to abandon them. But they became so wrapped up in hiding their insecurity that Kate saw that the game was more important to them than she was, so she alienated both of them.

Foster, Briggs, and Spooner each probably saw that their

continued security was dependent upon being able to stay in Hirst's house. Hirst did not so much choose Foster and Briggs as their strategy for influencing him proved better than Spooner's, so he became the "odd man out."

The development of the memory plays into the memory-menace plays show a learning process on Pinter's part. Possibly he saw ways to change and improve the plays after seeing them performed. He shows this by taking different viewpoints of the same subject matter. In Landscape, he shows a man and woman with realities so different that they could not directly communicate. In Night, he again uses a man and a woman with different memories, but he sees the effect love has on keeping these separate memories from causing the situation found in Landscape. Beth remembers her past love, but the audience cannot see how she is remembering it, so Pinter goes into the mind of the woman in Silence. In Old Times, Pinter explores the possibilities of having the personal memories related in the earlier memory plays actively challenged with menace intended, but the focus person remained intact. In No Man's Land, the attack was successful, but the question remains whether the right persons won. Possibly Pinter thought that Kate's defense of her individuality was too predictable, so he left the identity of the true intruder open in No Man's Land.

Footnotes

[1]Harold Pinter, "Writing for the Theatre," in Complete Works: One (New York: Grove, 1976), p. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 11.

[3]Ibid., p. 13.

[4]Ibid., p. 15.

[5]Ibid., p. 15.

[6]Stephen Gale, Butter's Going Up (North Carolina: Duke Univ. Press, 1977), p. 11.

[7]Harold Pinter, Landscape, in Complete Works: Three (New York: Grove, 1978), p. 185. (Subsequent page numbers will appear in the text.)

[8]Arnold P. Hinchliffe, Harold Pinter Rev. Ed. (Boston: Twayne, 1981), p. 142.

[9]Refer to Pinter's objection to making definitive statements in the introduction.

[10]Duff describes a scene in the pub where the landlord is more interested in handling a complaint than talking to him. Later Duff gives a lecture to the landlord on storing kegs of beer; possibly this is an attempt to impress the landlord with his knowledge and thus be admired by him.

[11]Harold Pinter, Silence, in Complete Works: Three (New York: Grove, 1978), p. 214. (Subsequent page numbers will appear in the text.)

[12]Harold Pinter, Night, in Complete Works: Three (New York: Grove, 1978), pp. 225-226. (Subsequent page numbers will appear in the text,)

[13]Gale, p. 184.

[14]Ibid., p. 186.

Footnotes (continued)

[15]Harold Pinter, Old Times (New York: Grove, 1971), pp. 31-32. (Subsequent page numbers will appear in the text.)

[16]Barbara Kreps, "Time and Harold Pinter's Possible Realities: Art as Life and Vice Versa," Modern Drama, 22 (1979), 157.

[17]Gale, p. 17.

[18]Thomas P. Adler, "From Flux To Fixity: Art And Death In Pinter's No Man's Land," Arizona Quarterly, 35 (1979), 197-204.

[19]Harold Pinter, No Man's Land (New York: Grove, 1975), p. 17. (Subsequent page numbers will appear in the text.)

[20]Gale, p. 211.

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